JOINT OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
NGO CONSULTATION MEETING ON
EU FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

7 APRIL 2011, BUDAPEST

WORKING GROUP I: COMMON REACTION OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY TO THE COMMUNICATION ON THE EU FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES- The objective of the working group was to identify strengths and weaknesses of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategy and prepare a common reaction of the civil society. The reaction was presented at the platform meeting on April 8 by Zeljko Jovanovic.

WORKING GROUP II: THE NEXT PHASE – THE QUALITY OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT; COMMON CONCERNS AND STRATEGIES - The objective of the working group was to analyze the role of the civil society during the planning and development of national strategies.

WORKING GROUP III: CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGIES ON ENSURING PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION - The objective of the working group was to analyze mechanisms for influencing European Commission communication with the National Governments and ensuring civil society participation.

On consultation

- Civil society expected the Commission to follow a transparent and inclusive consultation process, including Roma NGOs and experts who work with Roma communities on grasssroot level on a daily basis;
- The Commission did not meet with Principle No. 9 (Involvement of civil society) and No. 10 (Active participation of the Roma) of the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion;
- The Commission did not follow its own standards and practices in consultations, such as in case of strategy for gender equality in development policy;
- The meetings of the Integrated European Platform for Roma Inclusion failed using the opportunity to be linked to the drafting of the Framework;
- **For any further process on European and national level (setting up National Roma Integration Strategies), consultation process should be ensured with the civil society, including Roma NGOs, women and youth groups;**
- Without an appropriate consultation process, the civil society considers any strategy illegitimate.

On content

- Commission suggests that Roma are a „deviant" community that needs to be 'included'. **The tone is paternalistic**. The Framework puts the burden of integration on the Roma community by:
  - setting low targets, especially in education – completion of primary education,
  - recognizing cultural, but not social and economic differencies among Roma groups (not all the Roma are uneducated, unemployed, etc.)

- **Council should commit to use the the Commission's targets as minimum**,
- **The issue of discrimination, racist violence and human rights is fully missing from the Framework document:**
  - social inclusion agenda/strategies cannot be implemented successfully without tackling anti- Roma sentiment and racist violence,
  - existing mechanisms and competences to combat fundamental rights violations, racism and violence are not used adequately at EU level,
  - institutional racism should be addressed – zero tolerance, race equality directive should be better monitored, used, and implemented,
  - all the National Strategies should provide respect for human rights and space to eliminate anti Gypsism across Europe,
- **Cross cutting critical issues as gender equeality and youth empowerment as well as child poverty are not addressed by the Framework,**
- Components of Roma inclusion should be included in the existing active citizenship programs.

Where civil society can and ready to help
- Participating in the developments of National Integration Strategies,
- Sharing good and bad experience of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, when it comes to planning, implementation and monitoring,
- Sharing lessons from many projects implemented by NGOs on Roma inclusion, that could be and should be scaled up,
- Taking responsibility for independent monitoring on the progress by setting up an independent monitoring body with Roma and pro Roma NGOs who are legitimate and transparent,
- Building capacity at national and grass root level for strategy implementation.

What does civil society expect from the national governments
- Ensuring funding from both state budget and utilization the EU funds,
- Including the future National Roma Integration Strategies in the National Reform Programmes (Europe 2020)
- Ensuring proper participation of the civil society and Roma representatives (including women and youth groups) in the drafting or improvement of the national strategies,
- Collecting ethnically disaggregated data, setting indicators for measuring progress and deadlines for implementation.

What does civil society expect from the European Commission
- Elaborating Guidelines for minimum standrards for the member states to draft and implement the National Roma Integration Strategies,
- Simplifying the buroucratic requirements for using EU funds to encourage local governments to make use of the funds and in the same time increasing the control of transparency and accountability,
- Making sure that future strategies include issues: child poverty, gender equality and youth empowerment, migration and strengthening Roma identity and culture,

- Finding different mechanism for the improvement, development of the Platform to allow productive dialogue between Member States and Roma Decade countries, civil society, international partners. The Platform's results should feed in the annual assessment report presented to European Parliament and the Council of the EU,
- Establishing a Roma Focal Point of experts for independent monitoring,
- Supporting independent monitoring by the Roma civil society, not through the national governments, but directly from EC.

What does civil society expect from the Council Conclusions
- Endorsing the Communication,
- Considering the Commuinication as minimum and going beyond the targets suggested by the Communication,
- Highlighting anti-gypsism by tasking the Europen Commission to include components of Roma inclusion into existing active citizenship programs,
- Requesting a monitoring mechanism from both rights and social inclusion perspectives and taking up a role in the monitoring process.